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TAGS: OPRC KMDR KPAO TW

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: CROSS-STRAIT RELATIONS

**¶1.** Summary: As newspapers in Taiwan continued their coverage April 22 of the upcoming China trips by KMT Chairman Lien Chan and PFP Chairman James Soong, the focus shifted to the U.S. attitude toward the trips. The centrist "China Times" ran a banner headline on its front page that read: "Secret meetings prior to [Lien's and Soong's] departure; Lien and Soong talked to the United States about their trips to China." The sub-headline added: "Lien Chan met with [AIT Taipei Director] Doug Paal Wednesday; James Soong also met with a U.S. official Monday." A page-two news story of the "China Times" also headlined: "From hinting to supporting; United States welcomes and looks favorably on Lien's visit to mainland China," and the sub-headline said: "[Washington] clearly indicates 'China trip is a positive step' and believes dialogue is the route to resolve cross-Straits tensions. The United States will not get involved should the meeting between Lien and [Chinese President] Hu Jintao trigger inner disputes inside Taiwan." The pro-independence "Liberty Times," Taiwan's biggest daily, and the pro-unification "United Daily News," both carried U.S. Deputy Department of State Spokesman Adam Ereli's remarks that the recent travel to China by Taiwan individuals are positive steps. A front-page news story in the pro-independence "Taiwan Daily" and a page-two news story in the pro-independence "Liberty Times," on the other hand, reported on a press conference held by former President Lee Teng-hui in which he lashed out at the upcoming visits to China by Lien and Soong, calling the trips "collusion with the Chinese Communist Party and a sell-out of Taiwan." Lee also emphasized that cross-Straits tension is an international issue that should be tackled by Washington, Tokyo, Taipei and Beijing in a conference held in the United States.

**¶2.** A "China Times" news analysis said the cross-Straits situation, if as manageable as it appears to be now, is the most favorable status for the United States; any attempt to sabotage the status quo, either via unification or Taiwan independence, is not an option for the United States. A "United Daily News" editorial views the China trips by Lien and Soong as turning points following more than ten years of a 'trial-and-error process' regarding cross-Straits relations. The editorial said it would be a "win-win" situation for both sides if the talks succeed, and neither side will win if they fail. End summary.

A) "One China Is Not the Major Issue, 'Free Interpretation' [of the One China] by Both Sides of the Taiwan Strait Is the [Real] Bottom Line"

Journalist Luo Ju-lan noted in a news analysis of the centrist, pro-status quo "China Times" [circulation: 600,000] (4/22):

". For cross-Straits relations, 'tensions' across the Taiwan Strait, if as manageable as they appear to be now, [create] the most favorable status for the United States. Both sides of the Taiwan Strait anticipate the intervention of the United States - one side has its [potential market for] economics and trade as a bargaining chip while the other side has the need to buy weapons [from the United States], and of course no one will reject the situation when it is welcomed by both sides. Therefore, any attempt to sabotage the status quo, either by unification or [Taiwan] independence, is not an option for the United States.

"Both the Pan-Blue and Pan-Green Camps are clearly aware of such an 'international reality,' so they are vying to stick labels on each other. The Green Camp claims that the Blue is moving toward unification, while the Blue Camp says the Green is pursuing Taiwan independence; both sides are competing for support from the United States. Washington's attitude is also like a scale with weights that tries to strike a balance; it shows support for the China trips by [KMT Chairman] Lien Chan and [PFP Chairman] James Soong, but in the meantime, it also calls on Beijing to start a dialogue with the Taiwan administration. .

"The United States has many times expressed its support for the '1992 consensus' and has urged President Chen Shui-bian to say something about the consensus in his inaugural speeches. 'One China with both sides free to interpret what it means' is Washington's 'bottom line,' but it cannot say it directly to the KMT, and the focus [of the bottom line] lies really in 'the free interpretation by both sides' rather than the 'one China.' Even though Washington's position made known to the international community is that it adheres to the 'one China' [policy], the ruling and opposition parties in Taiwan still need to keep their differences regarding the one China, otherwise if the interaction across the Taiwan Strait leans toward 'unification,' the cross-Strait situation may become more difficult to control.

"If [we] are to judge Lien's trip of peace based on this [assumption], under the interactive constraints of the triangular relationship between Washington, Taipei and Beijing, it will be difficult for Lien to achieve any breakthroughs with regard to Taiwan's sovereignty issue. At most, both sides can return to the ambiguity of 'free interpretation' [of the one China] whereas Beijing acknowledges the fact that both sides of the Taiwan Strait are ruled separately and tacitly recognizes the existence of the Republic of China. There is of course a long distance from such a development to the final 'unification,' but since tension will be alleviated and status quo maintained, Lien's trip will be a result that both Washington and Beijing are happy to see."

B) "If Both Lien and Soong Could Visit Mainland China with Chen Shui-bian's Blessing"

The pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 600,000] editorialized (4/22):

". Lien's and Soong's visits to mainland China this time are the first major personal meetings between senior political leaders of both sides of the Taiwan Strait over the past 56 years. The visits are also the first-ever turning point following the more than ten years of 'try-and-error process' of the cross-Strait relations. Not only the thoughts of the people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait but also the whole world's attention will focus on these visits. As a result, it should not be regarded as an exaggeration if we say the visits by Lien and Soong 'must be successful.' If Lien and Soong have successful separate trips to China, it will be a win-win situation for both sides. If they fail, neither side of the Taiwan Strait wins.. .

"For Taiwan in particular, it should not view these trips simply as programs for Lien or Soong or for the KMT or the PFP. Taiwan should see the visits as a development commonly yearned by both the ruling and opposition parties of Taiwan. ."

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